



## A new species of *Syzygium* (Myrtaceae) from Kerala, India

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### Abstract

A new species of *Syzygium*, *S. chemunjianum* is described and illustrated from the Agasthyamala Biosphere Reserve, southern Western Ghats, Kerala, India. It is similar to *S. tamilnadensis* but differs from it in habit, colour and nature of blaze, shape of leaves, number of intramarginal nerves, position of inflorescence, the colour, size and shape of fruits and size of seeds.

**Key words:** Western Ghats, Agasthyamala Biosphere Reserve, Chemunji hills

The genus *Syzygium* Gaertner (1788: 166) (Myrtaceae) comprises more than 1200 species mainly distributed in the Old World tropics from Africa to the West Pacific with major concentration in Malasia (Parnell *et al.* 2007). In India, 55 taxa have so far been reported (Govaerts *et al.* 2008; Shareef *et al.* 2012b), with the highest concentration in the Western Ghats of 49 taxa (Sheeba *et al.* 2003; Viswanathan & Manikandan, 2008; Shareef *et al.* 2010), among which ca. 20 taxa are endemic. Recent taxonomic enumeration in the genus revealed ca. 42 taxa to occur in Kerala state alone; of which 16 are endemic to the Western Ghats. (Nayar *et al.* 2006; Shareef *et al.* 2012a; Shareef *et al.* 2012b).

During botanical exploration of the Agasthyamala Biosphere Reserve, the senior author collected flowering and fruiting specimens of a *Syzygium* from Pongalappara and later from Chemunji hills and Pandipath of Thiruvananthapuram district in Kerala state. The species resembles *S. tamilnadensis* Rathakr. & Chithra (1983:1580) but differs in several aspects (Table.1). On critical examination of original material of *S. tamilnadensis* (Wight, 1042, K!) and perusal of relevant literature (Wight, 1846; Gamble, 1919), the new collection was found to be an undescribed species. Hence it is here described and illustrated as a species new to science.

### Taxonomy

*Syzygium chemunjianum* Shareef, E.S. S.Kumar & Roy *sp. nov.* (Figs. 1 & 2)

**Type:**—INDIA. Kerala: Thiruvananthapuram district, Chemunji hills, 1200 m, 25 October 2012 (with flowers), S. M. Shareef 72499 (holotype TBGT! isotypes MH! TBGT!).

Shrub to small evergreen tree, ca. 7 m high; bark smooth, grayish-white, blaze dark reddish brown; twigs at first quadrangular, later terete, grayish-brown on drying. Leaves opposite, coriaceous, obovate or narrowly obovate, 4–7 × 2–4 cm, apex obtuse or obtusely acuminate, base tapering, margin entire and recurved, gland dotted on both sides, brown beneath on drying; midrib channeled above and raised beneath; lateral nerves ca. 32 pairs on either side, obscure above and prominent below; tertiaries reticulated; intramarginal vein one tiered, ca. 0.5 mm from margins. Petiole 0.7–1 cm long, thick and robust, black on drying. Inflorescence terminal cymes, much branched, ca. 7 cm long; peduncle and inflorescence branches quadrangular and sulcate; branches often leafy; bracts obtuse, ca. 1.2 × 1.75 mm, caducous; bracteoles obtuse, ca. 1.5 × 2 mm,